

# Wellness Notes

## Nonulcer Stomach Pain\*

### (Part I)

Sometimes, people see their doctors for stomach pain that they think is caused by an ulcer, but it isn't. Although you may have gnawing upper abdominal pain, diagnostic tests don't reveal an ulcer or other digestive problem — all tests come back normal. If this is so, you may have a type of indigestion called nonulcer stomach pain.

Nonulcer stomach pain is a common, sometimes long-lasting (chronic) disorder of the upper gastrointestinal system, which includes your esophagus and first part of your small intestine (duodenum) as well as your stomach. The disorder can cause signs and symptoms that resemble those of a peptic ulcer, such as pain or discomfort in your upper abdomen, often accompanied by bloating, belching and nausea.

Nonulcer stomach pain occurs for no apparent reason and isn't necessarily related to a particular disease. Rather, the culprit may be a temporary problem, such as eating too quickly, overeating or dealing with a stressful event. For some people, stomach pain is a chronic condition. For many people, however, the symptoms of nonulcer stomach pain are often short-lived and preventable.

The signs and symptoms of nonulcer stomach pain may include:

- A burning sensation or discomfort in your upper abdomen or lower chest, sometimes relieved by food or antacids
- Bloating
- Belching
- Gas (flatulence)
- An early feeling of fullness with meals
- Nausea

An unhealthy lifestyle can contribute to nonulcer stomach pain. Stress, fatigue, poor diet, not enough rest, and lack of exercise may aggravate its signs and symptoms.

The exact cause of nonulcer stomach pain is unknown. In some cases it may occur after a viral infection, but this is rare. Doctors consider it a functional disorder not necessarily related to a specific disease. However, temporary and often aggravating factors can be common causes of the signs and symptoms of nonulcer stomach pain.

Some people naturally are at higher risk of nonulcer stomach pain than others are. Certain lifestyle factors can increase your risk, including: overeating, eating too quickly, sometimes with air swallowing, drinking carbonated beverages, eating spicy foods, eating greasy or fatty foods, consuming too much caffeine or alcohol, smoking, taking certain medications, especially nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others), and antibiotics and stress.